

HARPSWELL *BULLETIN*

News for Harpswell Residents & Property Owners from the Town Office – December '07

Town Web Site: www.harpswell.maine.gov

November 6, 2007 Referendum Updates

1. **Mitchell Field Masterplan:** Harpswell voters approved the conceptual masterplan for Mitchell Field by a vote of 929 (56.3%) to 720 (43.7%). Passage of the plan will lead to the formation of a Selectmen-appointed Implementation Committee to advise Selectmen and develop next steps toward implementation. The final plan set aside 9 acres for marine business, 4 acres for mixed-income cluster housing, and the remaining acreage (over 100) for conservation and recreational uses. Beach access is proposed for the south side of the pier, while on the north side of the pier, a public boat launch is suggested. Uses for the outer pier and for existing buildings were not addressed in the conceptual plan, but will likely be part of future discussions regarding uses and implementation. Implementing components of the masterplan will require consideration at future town meetings, specifically with regard to the appropriation of local funds.
2. **Preliminary Work at Cribstone Bridge for Utilities To Be Located Below the Sidewalk:** By a vote of 1307 (78.2%) to 364 (21.8%), preliminary work, to be undertaken by the Maine Department of Transportation, has been approved (\$35,000) that would enable future relocation of Cribstone Bridge utilities under the sidewalk. The State will not fund this utility relocation work because it is considered discretionary. The Town will now work to obtain realistic figures from Central Maine Power, Comcast and Verizon (current estimates from the three utilities exceed \$600,000) before seeking future voter approval. Note: A temporary bridge will be constructed in the spring of 2008 so that major rehabilitation of the Cribstone Bridge can take place in 2009 and 2010. During the course of the Cribstone Bridge project, it is our understanding that progress reports will be posted on MDOT's website.

Sign Ordinance Task Force

Selectmen appointed a five-member task force in October to study state statute and local ordinances with respect to on-premise business signs. The group is tasked with reviewing current laws, understanding their effect on Harpswell businesses, and developing recommendations for the Selectmen's consideration that could include modification to existing regulatory language. Members of the task force are seeking comment from the business community as well as from the public at-large. Please send e-mail comments to harpswell@zwi.net or contact one of the task force members: Jennifer VerPlanck at 725-9284; Michelle Henning at 833-5556; Cathy Martinez at 833-5026; Hati Modr at 833-2815; or Ellie Multer at 833-5476. The task force intends to report back to Selectmen by mid-January.

Failed Septic System Program

Have problems with your septic system? Live in Harpswell year-round? Short of funds to replace your system?

Please call the Code Enforcement Office at 833-5771 or stop by the Town Office and ask about the income-eligible Grant/Loan Program for replacing failed septic systems. This is a program administered entirely at the local level by the Town of Harpswell.

Recreation Offerings

Harpswell Ararat Youth Basketball: There is still space on the teams for girls and boys grades 3-4 and 5-6. Call the Recreation Director at 833-5771 if you know a child interested in playing.

Adult Coed Basketball continues at Harpswell Islands School on Wednesdays from 6:00 -7:45pm. No pre-registration is required.

Bridge for players with experience continues at the Town Office on Tuesdays at 1:00pm. Call ahead if interested.

Skiing and Snowboarding: The Recreation Department will sponsor Friday night skiing and snowboarding at Lost Valley Ski Resort in Auburn. The program starts on January 11th and runs for 6 weeks. Deadline for registration is December 10 with a late fee of \$15 charged after that date. Free bus transportation from Harpswell Islands School is provided for kids and adults. Costs: Adult or child 2 hours skiing/snowboarding, no lessons, \$60, with rentals the cost is \$140. One hour ski or snowboard lessons and 1 hour skiing/snowboarding is \$110; with rentals \$190. Child under 6 free with parent, equipment rental \$80.

Socrates Café will meet on December 12 at the Blackbird Café from 7:00 – 8:30 p.m. Discussion will center on the question, “*Morals and Ethics, Relative or Absolute?*” No pre-registration. Gatherings will be held monthly at different locations with topics and format evolving.

Developmental Basketball: January will bring development basketball for grades K, 1 and 2. Flyers will be available at the Town Office, online at www.harpswell.maine.gov, or call Recreation Director Liz Bouvé at 833-5771 for more information.

Property Tax Relief for Harpswell residents

Applications are now available at the Town Office or online at www.maine.gov/revenue for the 2006 Maine Residents Property Tax and Rent Refund “Circuit Breaker” Program. Residents may qualify if:

- You do not have a spouse or dependent(s) and your 2006 household income was \$80,750 or less; or
- You have spouse or dependent(s) and your 2006 household income was \$105,750 or less
AND
- Your 2006 property tax was more than 4% of your 2006 household income; or,
- The rent you paid in 2006 was more than 20% of your 2006 household income

NOTE: Low-income Seniors do not need to meet these requirements

Applications must be filed by June 2, 2008. The Town’s Treasurer Marguerite Kelly is available by appointment to assist anyone with the application. Please call the Town Office at 833-5771 to schedule an appointment.

Emergency Services Study

The Town has engaged the services of Emergency Services Consulting, Incorporated (ESCi), to undertake a comprehensive review of vehicular needs and operations of the three volunteer fire and rescue departments. Department members have gathered data, provided facility tours and participated in consultant-led discussions. ESCi recently presented its preliminary findings to the Town. A final report is expected by late December with a concluding presentation to occur in January 2008. The study is funded almost entirely by a \$25,000 grant from the Maine Municipal Bond Bank.

Wind Turbine Exploration on Long Reach Mountain

Harpswell resident Richard Newman approached the Board of Selectmen for permission to research the possibility of 3-4 wind turbines being located on Town property along Long Reach Mountain ridge behind the Town Office. Mr. Newman's preliminary investigation indicates that there is a good possibility that the Long Reach location could support a successful renewable energy wind project. Preliminary data from the Brunswick Naval Air Station extrapolated for the Harpswell site indicates that the Long Reach location may have potential for generating sustainable wind power. First, however, a wind study would need to be accomplished which could cost upwards of \$25,000. The Town has inquired of the University of Massachusetts whether it has funding available for a wind study in Harpswell. If the Town were to receive funding of any kind, including grants or donations, it could not accept those funds until such time as Town Meeting acted to approve the stated purpose for which those funds would be used—to perform a wind study on Long Reach.

Pipeline Removal Update

The Town has received confirming information from Senator Susan Collins' Office that the pipelines running from Mitchell Field to Brunswick Naval Air Station will be removed by the federal government. For several years, Town officials have been actively working with the Congressional delegation to see that the issue is addressed and funded by Congress. On several occasions, Brian Whitney, field representative for Senator Olympia Snowe, met with Town officials to keep the Town informed of the progress with regard to its request for pipeline removal. The latest official communication indicates that the project will be budgeted for in 2008, and scheduled to start in the spring of 2009. Once the pipelines have been removed, the Town will coordinate efforts to see that the easements are legally extinguished and that the federal government no longer has any easement rights with regard to the properties involved. GZA GeoEnvironmental Engineering, Inc., of Portland, was hired by the federal government to conduct a pipeline survey and to develop cost estimates for removal of the pipeline. The GZA report of September 14, 2007 indicates the removal effort will take about three years and cost upwards of \$7.6 million.

Town Landing Improvements

Tide Mill, Ash Point: Deputy Town Administrator Terri Sawyer has spear-headed an effort for improving the Town's property at Tide Mill. The plan, partially funded by a grant, calls for landscaping, signage and several parking spots to make the site more user friendly and accessible to the public. There will be no paved boat launch at this site; however, small boats, such as kayaks, may be hand-carried to the shore.

Giant's Stairs, Bailey Island: Town staff and various committee members have worked on a grant application to the Maine Department of Conservation. If the Town's project is selected for funding, improvements to the Giant's Stairs path on Bailey Island will be undertaken. Over the years, the path has become well worn and in need of erosion control. Trail builders from the Maine Conservation Corps specializing in building and upgrading outdoor recreational trails will work with the Town on accomplishing the improvements. In addition, the Town has been approached by several area landowners who are interested in providing further public access to the Giant's Stairs. Their proposal would require Town meeting approval before becoming a publicly held easement for the public's benefit.

Important Dates

Dec. 15, 2007: Second and final payment for 2007 tax year
Dec. 14, 2007: Nomination papers available for elected positions
Dec. 31, 2007: Registration deadline for 2008 dog licenses
Jan. 12, 2008: Rabies Clinic, 9:00am – 1:00pm, Harpswell Town Office
Jan. 23, 2008: Nomination papers due for elected positions
Jan. 25, 2008: Commemoration of 250 years of the Town's incorporation; details forthcoming
March 8, 2008: Annual Town Meeting at Harpswell Islands School, time to be announced

Who is Harpswell's Oldest Resident?

Do you know who Harpswell's oldest resident is? The Town is trying to determine who that person might be so that a longstanding tradition of awarding the Boston Post Cane can continue. Please contact Town Clerk Rosalind Knight, 833-5771, for more information. Harpswell's most recent recipient was the Reverend James E. Herrick, of Bailey Island, who passed away at the age of 102.

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Town of Harpswell
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